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1989 as a Return to Europe:

On Revolution, Reform, and Reconciliation with a Traumatic Past

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Abstract
The present paper examines the 1989 collapse of communist rule in East-Central Europe (ECE) and the subsequent developments by focusing on the countries that experienced a regime change in 1989, i.e., Poland, Hungary, former GDR and Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania. Thus, *revolution*, *reform* and *reconciliation* with the recent past are key concepts in terms of the present analysis. The main argument put forward by this study is that the nature of the 1989 regime change has influenced to a large extent the subsequent developments in the respective countries, especially with regard to the processes of democratization and integration into the European structures. Equally important, it influenced the way in which the wrongdoings of the defunct communist regimes were dealt with. This study is concerned with three major issues: (1) the nature of regime change; (2) the factors that determined the speed of the democratic consolidation process; and (3) the ways of coming to terms with the communist pasts, and consists of two main sections.
The first section proposes an explanatory model of the collapse of communist dictatorships in ECE centered on a culturalist-structuralist approach and demonstrates that the regime change in ECE was determined by a complex aggregation of three kinds of factors (structural, nation-specific and conjunctural). Furthermore, this section shows that the particular aspects of regime change at country level were determined in each case by the interplay of regime and community political subcultures. The second section discusses two major aspects of democratic transition for the cases considered: (1) the pace of democratic transformation; and (2) the issue of coming to terms with the communist past. Thus, this second section is divided into two parts. The first part examines the speed of political and economic reforms and argues that in those countries in which the political transformation went hand in hand with the economic reform the transition was shorter. Establishing a delicate equilibrium between "institutional design" and "invisible hand" turned out to be the key for a more rapid and therefore less tortuous transition. The second part of this section is concerned with the problem of coming to terms with the past and the adoption of lustration legislation. The present study argues that the nature of the regime change has largely influenced the strategy of fulfilling the "backward looking" task of the post-1989 regimes during the 1989-1999 period. In dealing with the wrongdoings of the defunct communist regimes in the six countries under scrutiny, one should discern between: (1) application of early lustration (former East Germany and Czechoslovakia); (2) late initiation of lustration as a result of political competition (Poland and Romania, 1997, respectively, 1999); and (3) very limited lustration in Hungary and Bulgaria. Nevertheless, unified Germany stands out as an exceptional case in terms of scope and outcome of the process of transitional justice.

Keywords
Return to Europe, transitional justice, revolution, regime change, communist past, trauma, lustration, reconciliation

Explaining the Collapse: Structure, Culture and Contingency

When addressing the "great transformation" of 1989, a major difficulty one encounters is to provide an explanation of the demise of communist regimes in countries with different cultural-historical and socio-economic backgrounds, characterized by distinct political cultures. This aspect needs to be emphasized once more in order to grasp the almost exceptional nature of the 1989 events. Thus, this author follows the distinction between "patrimonial." "national-accommodative" and "bureaucratic-authoritarian" communist regimes put forward by Herbert Kitschelt, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski and Gábor Tóka.[1] Consequently, this study discerns between three groups of communist regimes, as follows: (1) "Bureaucratic-authoritarian" – German Democratic Republic (GDR) and Czechoslovakia; (2) "National-accommodative" – Poland and Hungary; and (3) "Patrimonial" – Romania and Bulgaria. A brief analysis of the initial conditions at the moment of the communist takeover and of the way regime and society interacted until 1989 is provided below:

(1) *Bureaucratic-authoritarian communism* (GDR and Czechoslovakia) *Initial conditions*: pre-existence of a democratic experience characterized by a high degree of political mobilization and existence of alternative visions of modernity and modernization strategies. Industrial development was significant and originated both in state-owned and private businesses. Due to the industrial development, the working class was numerous and had a degree of self-consciousness, thus the communist parties had a large base of recruitment. State bureaucracy was well developed and educated, and adherence to impersonal rules and procedures was higher within state apparatus and society in general. The interwar level of industrialization and urbanization of these countries was comparable to the West. *Communist rule*: the party was well-structured and in control of a numerous and organized working-class, a disciplined bureaucracy and a significant stratum of technical intelligentsia. In religious terms, Protestantism and Catholicism prevailed, with the former being even stronger. Dissent within both party and society was not tolerated and was swiftly repressed. No major societal opposition movements emerged in such regimes until 1989.

(2) *National-accommodative communism* (Poland and Hungary). *Initial conditions*: the pre-existence of a significant industrial development, which did not overcome the urban-rural divide; presence of a large strata of educated people relying on the jobs within the state apparatus; the working class was numerous but did not develop into a movement; communist partied did exist but appealed only to some urban groups; in religious terms, Catholicism and Protestantism prevailed. *Communist rule*: the communist party was less institutionalized and societal opposition grew stronger, supported by religious groups, especially Catholic. The communist party could not claim to be either the sole guarantor of country's modernization, nor was able to control the society via a hierarchically structured Party and a disciplined working-class. Thus, it was compelled to tolerate a certain level of autonomy in cultural and religious spheres, which led to the outbreak of societal unrest that put the very existence of the system into question well before 1989.

(3) *Patrimonial communism* (Romania and Bulgaria). *Initial conditions*: the countries were modernized almost exclusively from above with a limited contribution from private businesses; industrialization was confined to some areas while the rest of the population remained involved in agriculture; the bulk of the population was peasant; there were only a few urban centres and there was a wide gap between urban and rural life. Adherence to

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[1] See Herbert Kitschelt et al., *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 21-28.

impersonal rules and procedures was low, while public life was affected by corruption, clientelism and nepotism. Greek-Orthodoxy prevailed and the Church was in general subservient to the state. Since industry was only developing, the working class was small in size and trade unionism was at its beginnings. As a consequence, the communist parties were rather small and thus were not prominent on the political scene. *Communist rule*: Once in power, the communist elite followed a sustained policy of emulating the Soviet model. Basically, the working class was born due to the industrialization policy of the regime, and the same can be said about technical intelligentsia. Dissidence developed only slowly, due to the cooptation by the regime of large strata of the population. Instrumentalization of nationalism also provided support for the regime. The Church, in general, collaborated with the regime.

In light of the above, it becomes clear that a crucial problem is to devise an explanatory model of the 1989 transformation able to accommodate the significant differences presented above between the three groups of countries – (1) GDR and Czechoslovakia; (2) Poland and Hungary; and (3) Romania and Bulgaria – that, nevertheless, did experience a regime change during the same year 1989. The model proposed below permits a complex analysis – focusing on the intricate relationships between structures, subcultures, agency and contingency – of the phenomenon under scrutiny, i.e., the demise of communism in East-Central Europe. The main assumption is that the 1989 regime change in ECE was determined by a complicated and, sometimes, perplexing aggregation of *structural*, *nation-specific* and *conjunctural* factors. At the same time, the events of 1989 are seen as social processes, in the sense that the actors changed their behavior over time.

It is this author's opinion that the 1989 events in East-Central Europe did constitute revolutions, but a special sort of revolutions. On the one hand, people did experience a fundamental change: from one day to another almost everything changed in terms of the relationship between political power and society. At the same time, as Samuel N. Eisenstadt wonderfully put it, the 1989 revolutions were "post-modern" since because they were non-ideological, non-utopian, non-violent (with the exception of Romania), and were not carried out in the name of a particular class.[2] Their unexpected initiation, convoluted unfolding and ambiguous outcome creates difficulties in providing a working definition of the 1989 revolutions. Many authors have argued that violence has to be considered an integral part of a revolution, but then, according to such a criterion, only the 1989 events in Romania can be characterized as a "true" revolution. Two major elements have to be taken into consideration when one attempts at providing an in-depth analysis of the 1989 revolutions: (1) violence should not be considered a necessary element of revolution; and (2) mass protest should be regarded as an important precondition of a revolution. Consequently, the present work employs the following definition of a revolution: *A revolution is a rapid and fundamental domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership, and government activity and policies, following violent or non-violent mass protests*.[3]

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[2] See S. N. Eisenstadt, "The Breakdown of Communist Regimes and the Vicissitudes of Modernity," in Stephen R. Graubard, ed., *Exit from Communism* (New Brunswick, US: Transaction Publishers 1993), 34.

[3] Three definitions of a revolution have been considered in order to coin my definition: (1) "A revolution is a rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership, and government activity and policies" – Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 264; (2) A revolution is "a rapid and fundamental change of system" – Leslie Holmes, *Post-Communism: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), 131; and (3) A revolution is the "replacement of the elite and the introduction of a new political and economic order after (violent or non-violent) protests by the population" – Karl-Dieter, Peter Voss and Christiane Gern, *Origins of a Spontaneous Revolution: East Germany, 1989* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 225.

The explanatory model proposed by this paper model takes into consideration three types of factors, namely: (1) structural factors; (2) nation-specific factors; and, (3) conjunctural factors.[4] *Structural factors* are characteristic to the Soviet-type societies and contributed, to different degrees, to the demise of communism in the countries of East-Central Europe. In the terms of the present paper, two structural factors are of prime importance: (1.1) economic failure; and (1.2) ideological decay. The *nation-specific factors* taken into consideration by the present study are two varieties of *political culture*, namely: (2.1) regime political culture (the political culture of the respective communist regime); and, (2.2) community political culture (the political cultures of resistance). It was the interplay of regime and community political cultures that led to the varieties of post-modern revolutions experienced by the countries under analysis. As for *conjunctural factors*, two types are relevant: (3.1) external; and (3.2) internal. Following this conceptual framework, this paper addresses the collapse of state socialism in ECE. Let us examine briefly the way the above mentioned factors aggregated and led to the collapse of communism in ECE.

Structural factors – *economic failure* and *ideological decay* – manifested in each and every communist regime under scrutiny. *Economic failure* was a structural factor of prime importance that affected all communist regimes in ECE. As Bartlomiej Kaminski has aptly shown, the Polish communist economy went through four "investment cycles:" 1949-1957; 1958-1971; 1972-1982; and 1983-1988. All cycles ended up with a deep political crisis. The worst situations occurred in 1956 and 1980,[5] and these moments were exactly the crucial moments in Polish recent history identified as the "Polish October" (1956) and the "Polish August" (1980).[6] The fourth cycle, 1983-1988, ended with a crisis that brought down the communist regime in Poland and initiated the "snowball effect," that is, the chain reaction that led to the demise of communist regimes throughout ECE. In communist Hungary, during the 1950s and 1960s, the economy was conducted by following closely the model of a genuine command economy. In the late 1960s, however, Hungarian communists engaged in a systemic change. On 1 January 1968, the Kádár regime introduced a set of economic reforms, known as the New Economic Mechanism (NEM). János Kornai argues that the Hungarian reform, which consisted in the "radical abolition of short-term mandatory planning," proved its viability in spite of a partially developed market mechanism.[7] Although recent analyses show that the NEM failed in terms of macroeconomic results, it succeeded in initiating a timid institutional devolution of the regime and developing an enterprise culture. People engaged in supplementary working hours in the second economy, in addition to the job they had in the

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[4] Such a three-level classification was inspired by Ole Norgaard and Steven L. Sampson, who have explained the birth of the Polish Solidarity as an "outcome" of social and cultural factors. (For a critical analysis of the model proposed by Norgaard and Sampson see Michael D. Kennedy, *Professionals, Power and Solidarity in Poland: A Critical Sociology of Soviet-Type Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, , 1991), 60-62.

[5] See Bartlomiej Kaminski, *The Collapse of State Socialism: The Case of Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 120-21. Even in 1980, when Solidarity was born, a majority of the Poles were more concerned with the economic matters than, say, with the need for democratization. For instance, in his study of public opinion in Poland (focusing on the period between 1980 and 1982), David S. Mason argues that "for many Poles, the most important national goals remained economic ('material') ones.... Many of Solidarity's supporters believed the primary task of the new union was to secure better economic conditions." David S. Mason, *Public Opinion and Political Change in Poland, 1980-1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 60.

[6] Research conducted by Jerzy Eysymontt and Wojciech Maciejewski. Among the variables utilised were: (1) the share of the private consumption in total consumption; (2) the ratio of marriages to newly built dwellings; and (3) the real wage index. Quoted in Kaminski, 128.

[7] János Kornai, *Evolution of the Hungarian Economy, 1848-1998; Volume II: Paying the Bill for Goulash-Communism* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, 2000), 19. Hereafter cited as *Paying the Bill for Goulash-Communism*.

first economy, in order to increase their income and boost consumption.[8] Towards the late 1980s, the performance of the economy started to diminish. If one applies the theory of short-term setbacks to the Hungarian case, the situation in the late 1980s can be explained as follows: after the "golden period" of high consumption and rising expectations, the period of relative economic stagnation of the 1980s led to a rise of societal dissatisfaction with the regime. Nonetheless, the most telling example of the economic failure of state socialism is perhaps that of communist Romania where until the revolution of 1989, the economy was conducted in accordance with the rigid beliefs of economic Stalinism. A timid attempt to reform the Romanian command economy was made in the late 1960s by Alexandru Bîrlădeanu, a moderate market-socialist reformer, but he did not succeed in face of the supporters of a centrally planned economy (of which the most prominent was Nicolae Ceauşescu himself) and was marginalized beginning in 1968.[9] The first signs of a deep economic crisis appeared in the late 1970s. In the late 1980s, as many dissidents, critical intellectuals and even some former party officials stated publicly, for the major part of the Romanian population the conditions of life were at the lowest level among the communist countries in East-Central Europe (with the possible exception of Albania). Thus, in 1989, the high potential for protest of a majority of Romania's population was directly linked to the miseries of everyday life.

Ideological decay or the erosion of ideology was a phenomenon that all communist regimes in East-Central Europe had to face especially after Nikita Khrushchev's "secret speech" to the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The utopian goal of building a radically new society was challenged by the June 1956 Poznan workers revolt, while in Hungary it received a definitive blow in October 1956. The 1956 Hungarian revolution demonstrated that totalitarian ideology undeniably lost its strength and, to use Andrzej Walicki's inspired term, communism ceased to represent a "unifying Final Goal."[10] Ideology ceased to be a driving force in regime's relationship with the Hungarian society in the aftermath of the 1956 revolution. The same happened in former Czechoslovakia after the suppression of the Prague Spring by the August 1968 Soviet-led invasion of the country by the Warsaw Treaty Organization troops. In other cases, anti-fascism or nationalism acted for a while in support of the respective regimes. In the case of former GDR, anti-fascism provided a sort of ideological support for the regime, but after the suppression of the June 1953 revolt it was quite clear that the bulk of the population did not pay much attention to the GDR propaganda machine that demonized the allegedly "imperialistic" Federal Republic of Germany. On the contrary, the increased migration to West Germany over the period 1953-1961 forced the GDR regime to erect the Berlin Wall in August 1961, which underlined the "moral, political and economic" failure of state socialism in that country.[11] At the same time, it may be argued that the massive emigration to West Germany lowered the potential for protest within GDR for almost two decades. In the case of Romania, ideological decay was alleviated to some extent by the communist elite's post-1956 return to traditional values and gradual instrumentalization of nationalism. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the Stalinist leader of Romanian communists, became increasingly concerned with preserving his position. He

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[8] Kornai, *Paying the Bill for Goulash-Communism*, 41-42.

[9] Bîrlădeanu was Minister of Foreign Trade (1948-1953), Vice-President of the State Planning Commission (1953-1955) and Vice-President of the Council of Ministers in charge with the coordination of economic matters and Romania's representative to the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance – CMEA (1955-1966). For more on Bîrlădeanu's views on economic policies under Dej and Ceauşescu see Lavinia Betea, *Alexandru Bîrlădeanu despre Dej, Ceauşescu şi Iliescu* (Alexandru Bîrlădeanu on Dej, Ceauşescu and Iliescu) (Bucharest: Editura Evenimentul Românesc, 1998), 109-113, 152, 196-197.

[10] Andrzej Walicki, *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom: The Rise and Fall of the Communist Utopia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 517.

[11] See Stefan Wolle, *DDR* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer Verlag, 2004), 46.

skillfully managed to devise a strategy of avoiding de-Stalinization, based on independence from Moscow and rapid industrialization, which was favored by the 1956 events in Poland and Hungary. Since the Romanian communists supported the Soviet repression of the Hungarian revolution of 1956 and apparently displayed an absolute loyalty toward Soviet Union, in 1958 Khrushchev ordered the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Romania.[12] Nicolae Ceauşescu followed Gheorghiu-Dej's strategy of independence-cum-industrialization, which combined with the slight increase of population's standard of life during the 1960s and 1970s, became the principal source of legitimacy for the regime, and was perceived as such by an overwhelming majority of the population.[13] A Romanian high rank party official concisely described this strategy when, in a discussion with a foreign diplomat, exclaimed: "Independence is our legitimacy!"[14] At the same time, by mid-1980s, nationalism and industrialization could not alleviate the dire consequences of regime's mistaken economic policies. Especially after the coming to power of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985, a majority of the Romanian citizens were hoping in vain that the new supreme leader of the CPSU would do something to replace Ceauşescu at the top of the RCP hierarchy.

The *nation-specific* factors determined the nature of the regime change for the each case under scrutiny, i.e., negotiated or non-negotiated. This study proposes a discussion on political subcultures at two levels, regime and community, and argues that it was the interplay of the two that led to the specific aspects of the regime change. As Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell Jr. put it, "a political culture is a particular distribution of political attitudes, values, feelings, information and skills. As people's attitudes affect what they will do, a nation's political culture affects the conduct of its citizens and leaders throughout the political system."[15] Furthermore, as Sidney Verba has argued, the concept of political culture explains how "people respond to what they perceive of politics and how they interpret what they see."[16] This analysis draws on Kenneth Jowitt's definition of political culture, especially on his distinction between *regime political culture* (which, in the terms of this paper, is defined as the political culture of the respective communist elite) and *community political culture* (which, in the terms of this paper, is defined as the political cultures of resistance against the regime).[17] Furthermore, when addressing the issues of dominant and dissident political cultures, one should be aware of the path-dependency problem. First, these political cultures were influenced by the legacy of the interwar democratic regimes: the extent and quality of the usable past did matter, alongside subjective interpretations of national history and cultural

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[12] On the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania, see Sergiu Verona, *Military Occupation and Diplomacy: Soviet Troops in Romania, 1944-1958* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992).

[13] Concerning the concept of *legitimacy*, the present study employs Coleman's definition: "Legitimacy is simply the right to carry out certain authoritative actions and have them obeyed. It rests on a consensus of those actors in a society relevant to the continued exercise of authority—which may be the population as a whole or only certain parts of it." See James S. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), 470.

[14] Mihai Botez, *Românii despre ei înşişi* (Romanians about themselves) (Bucharest: Editura Litera, 1992), 33.

[15] Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell Jr., *Comparative Politics Today: A World View* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 39.

[16] Sidney Verba, "Comparative Political Culture," in Louis J. Cantori, ed., *Comparative Political Systems* (Boston: Holbrook Press, 1974), 227.

[17] Jowitt defines three types of political culture, related to the different levels of society: elite, regime and community political culture. *Elite political culture* is defined as "a set of informal adaptative (behavioral and attitudinal) postures that emerge as response to and consequence of a given elite's identity-forming experiences." *Regime political culture* is understood as "a set of informal adaptative (behavioral and attitudinal) postures that emerge in response to the institutional definition of social, economic, and political life." *Community political culture* is defined as "a set bbof informal adaptative (behavioral and attitudinal) postures that emerge in response to the historical relationships between regime and community." See Kenneth Jowitt, *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 51-52 and 54-56.

traditions. Equally important, modernization and nation-building represent long-term processes that were initiated long before the communist takeover and were only continued under state socialism. All these led to a differentiation between the communist regimes in ECE which, as shown above, can be divided into three categories: "bureaucratic-authoritarian;" "national-accommodative;" and "patrimonial." This distinction is particularly useful when analyzing the pace of reform after the 1989 regime change and will be dealt with in the second section of this study.

Turning back to the way the regime change took place, peacefully or violently, one should emphasize that this depends on two crucial aspects of regime and, respectively, community political cultures: (1) monolithism of the power elite; and (2) existence of alternatives to the ruling power within society. Where the power elite was compelled to offer a "tacit deal" to the society at large due to the ambiguous interwar legacy – a certain level of industrialization and urbanization, pre-existence of alternative visions of political and economic modernity, as well as a lesser degree of adherence to impersonal rules and procedures, less disciplined bureaucracy and working class, appreciable rural-urban divide – political bargaining became a major element of both regime and community political cultures. Furthermore, in such regimes the power elite proved to be less monolithic and splits at the top did take place. Thus, in Poland splits at the top of the Polish United Workers Party (PWUP) occurred in 1956, 1970 and 1981. In Hungary, a split at the top of Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party's (HSWP) permitted the 1956 Revolution to unfold instead of being brutally repressed immediately. Thus, the initiation of the Roundtable Talks in Poland marked the "strategic compromise" that led to a negotiated transition. Where the power elite proved to be monolithic, either because of a higher degree of institutionalization of the ruling communist party (like in GDR and Czechoslovakia) or due to a "sultanistic" type of state socialism (Romania and to some extent Bulgaria) the regime change occurred only in the favorable context determined by the "negotiated revolutions" in Poland in Hungary.

Another major factor that determined the nature of regime change was the presence or absence of political alternatives to the communist power within the respective societies. In peasant societies that were practically modernized by the communist regimes, such as Romanian and Bulgaria, opposition to the communist rule developed slowly. Clientelism and cooptation functioned quite well until the economic crisis made large segments of the population think in terms of biological survival. Dissident networks did not appear and cross-class alliances did not emerge in such societies. As a consequence, communist successor parties emerged as powerful contenders for power in post-communism in Romania and Bulgaria. In Poland and Hungary the communist rule was seriously challenged well before the "miraculous year" 1989. In this respect, an important element was the existence of structured opposition groups, that also constituted nuclei of civil society – benefiting in some case from Church support (especially the Catholic Church in Poland). True, as Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan aptly observed, in comparison with opposition parties in Spain Uruguay and Chile, which articulated alternative political programs before the regime change, the opposition groups in Central Europe did not devise alternative political programs before 1989.[18] Nevertheless, their sharp critique of "really existing socialism" came from alternative visions of modernity and this differentiated the dissident networks in Central Europe from the isolated dissidents in Southeast Europe.

Conjuncture also played a role in the unfolding of events in 1989. Although in some cases internal conjuncture did matter, it was the external conjuncture that influenced the breakdown of communist regimes in ECE. International media, Radio Free Europe most prominently, contributed heavily to the collapse of communist regimes in ECE. Nevertheless,

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[18] Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 247.

there were the external conjunctural factors that had a strong influence on the collapse of communism in East-Central Europe. Some authors have pointed out to the 1978 election of a Polish Pope, others have emphasized the role of the American President Ronald Reagan and his determination of establishing a high-tech, spatial weapon system that weakened the Soviet Union both economically and militarily, as factors that led to breakdown of communist regimes in ECE. All these assertions are true, and have to be seriously taken into consideration. However, two external conjunctural factors were of paramount importance in the collapse of communism in ECE: (1) the Gorbachev factor; and (2) the "snowball effect."

The coming to power of Mikhail S. Gorbachev, who became secretary general of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in March 1985 and the launch of his domestic *perestroika* were events that had an immense impact on the communist regimes of Eastern Europe. The Soviet policy of non-intervention during the "miraculous year 1989" contributed enormously to the collapse of the communist regimes in ECE.[19] After 1968, the relations between the USSR and the Sovietized countries of ECE stayed under the sign of the Brezhnev Doctrine, which asserted that the USSR had the right to intervene in any country in which the communist government was threatened. Under Gorbachev, however, the Sinatra Doctrine replaced the Brezhnev Doctrine, and this was made clear by the Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman, Gennady Gerasimov, on 25 October 1989. Gerasimov defined the so-called Sinatra Doctrine by stating that every country must decide for itself the path to be pursued and referring to Frank Sinatra's song "I did it my way."

The collapse of the communist regimes in ECE cannot be discussed apart from the events in neighboring countries. The "snowball" effect, namely the unfolding of events during the year 1989, had a decisive role in creating a special state of mind at both the level of the communist ruling elite and the level of the population. The snowball started to run downhill in Poland. In Hungary, the regime change pattern was influenced by the Polish Roundtable Talks, which took place during the period February-April 1989. The Polish example was "the only pattern of peaceful transition," as András Bozóki put it, and the Hungarian democratic opposition applied it successfully to their country. In the Romanian case, witness accounts from the period show that the breakdown of communist regimes throughout the region created a special state of mind among Romania's population. Furthermore, the true meaning of the 1989 events in ECE could not escape to those who served the regime. It was also due to the "snowball effect" that a large number of the secret police commanders and party activists remained passive during the crucial days of 21-22 December 1989.

Reform and Reconciliation with the Communist Past

As already mentioned, this section addresses two major issues related to the post-communist transformation: (1) pace of reform; and (2) dealing with the wrongdoings of the defunct regime and is therefore divided into two parts.[20] The first part discusses the pace of reforms and shows that although all the six countries under scrutiny have experienced a regime change during the same revolutionary year 1989, in terms of speed of reforms they can be divided into: *fast* (the former GDR and the Visegrad Group countries: Czech Republic, Hungary,

[19] Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (New York, Vintage Books, 1994), 4.

[20] See the discussion on looking at "existing West European models for templates of institutional reform" in post-1989 ECE in Wade Jacoby, "Talking the Talk and Walking the Walk: The Cultural and Institutional Effects of Western Models," in Frank Bönker, Klaus Müller and Andreas Pickel, eds., *Postcommunist Transformation and the Social Sciences: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 129-130.

Poland and Slovakia) and *slow* (Bulgaria and Romania) reformers.[21] The second part addresses the "backward looking" task of the post-1989 societies, i.e., the issue of dealing with the wrongdoings of the communist regimes. This part argues that, in spite of the significant differences that manifested between these countries in terms of pace of reform, in terms of systematically dealing with the communist past there is a clear division between former East Germany and the five other countries (although front runners and laggards could be also identified among these countries). In this respect, a paradoxical similarity could be observed between Poland, which initiated the great transformation of 1989, and Romania, which was the last in a row to join the revolutionary wave.

A Fragile Equilibrium: Institutional Design and the Invisible Hand

The initial enthusiasm about the collapse of communist rule faded away quite rapidly once the transformation process was initiated. Political and economic competition posed new and difficult challenges and "democratization" began to show its painful side. As Philippe C. Schmitter noted: "Given the high initial expectations of the people at large, it may come as a shock to realize that the fall of tyrants fails to spell the rise of endless harmony and good feelings."[22] A detailed analysis of what ordinary people in East-Central Europe really wanted when they poured into the streets and asked for a regime change would go much beyond the scope of the present paper. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that for many ordinary people in East-Central Europe it was the idealized image of the affluent West that fascinated them. People simply wanted to live better, and it was quite clear that the communist regimes were not able to provide for their populations in this respect. Robert Darnton, who witnessed the fall of state socialism in the former GDR while spending the academic year 1989-90 at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, remembers the discussion he had with an East German intellectual in Halle immediately after the *Wende*: "Colleague D leaned over and looked hard into my face: 'Two systems have competed foe almost a half a century,' he said. 'Which has won?' He gave the answer in English: '*The American way of life* [emphasis added].'"[23] However, the "American way of life" came with a price throughout East-Central Europe, and this was related to a painful economic transformation which at the end has had its winners and losers.

This section concentrates on the differences between the fast and slow reformers in East-Central Europe. It suggests that the *fast* reformers (the Visegrad group countries) managed to establish a "low-level equilibrium" between political transformation and economic reform. At the same time, it argues that in the case of the *slow* reformers (Romania and Bulgaria) the major issue was political in the conditions of a fierce confrontation between the democratic opposition and the successor communist parties, which led to a postponement of the neoliberal economic reform. With regard to the relationship between democracy and market economy, Béla Greskovits has provided an insightful analysis based on the case of post-1989 Hungary. Greskovits argues that the emerging democracies of Central Europe proved to be crisis resistant due to a "low-level equilibrium" that was established between "incomplete democracy" and "imperfect market economy:"

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[21] On the economic aspects that led to such a categorization see Jacek Rostowski and Milan Nicolić, "Macroeconomic Shocks and Policy Responses During Transition: A Cross-Country Comparison," in Leszek Balcerowicz, Cheryl W. Gray and Iraj Hoshi, eds., *Enterprise Exit Processes in Transition Economies: Downsizing, Workouts, and Liquidation* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998), 57.

[22] Philippe C. Schmitter, "Dangers and Dilemmas of Democracy," in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, eds., *The Global Resurgence of Democracy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 80.

[23] Robert Darnton, *Berlin Journal, 1989-1990* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), 192.

> Democracy and a market economy could be simultaneously introduced only because neither has been fully implemented. Democracy could only stabilize at the cost of some of its qualitative aspects because of the crisis and economic transformation. Economic transformation, in turn, has remained feasible only at a cost of its speed and radicalism, and its many imperfections are due not least to the democratic framework of the change. The economic and political systems reached an equilibrium, but at a lower level than is typical, for example, of developed Western market democracies.[24]

This section argues that it was the nature of regime change that influenced heavily the establishment of the "low-level equilibrium" during the transition period in the countries under scrutiny. The major difference between Romania and Bulgaria, on the one hand, and Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary, on the other hand, is that the political competition *in the former countries was past oriented,* and this was due to the fact that the communist successor parties acceded to power immediately after 1989, while *in the latter it was future oriented*, i.e., focusing simultaneously on democratization and market economy. (Obviously, former GDR is a different case, since due to its unification with West Germany it became intrinsic part of the West).

It may be argued that it was a general consensus throughout East-Central Europe with regard to general principles of democracy building: organization of free elections; establishment of multi-party-systems; reduction of state control over economic and social spheres; decentralization; observance of minority rights etc.[25] However, the debates over the pace of economic reform were extremely intricate. As Peter Hall has shown, the introduction of neoliberal reforms poses a three-faceted problem of "viability:" (1) economic; (2) administrative; and (3) political. In other words, it is about the professional capability of economists to devise valid reform programs, the ability of administrators to replace old (state) institutions with reform-oriented new ones; and the audacity of the ruling political elite to take the risk of introducing neoliberal reforms at the cost of losing votes.[26] To a great extent the *validity issue* has been solved by the fast reformers in the sense that political support for the reform program was secured in spite of the major shocks the respective economies had to face. According to Rostowski and Nicolić there were three kinds of shocks the fast reformers had to face:

1. the elimination of soft budget constraints…, the elimination of soft credit…, and the drastic reduction of budgetary subsidies to enterprises;
2. foreign trade shocks, resulting from the disappearance of export markets and the shift to world prices in convertible currencies for raw materials and energy;
3. overdevaluation, as trade was liberalized and currencies sharply devaluated to maintain the competitiveness of domestic producers.[27]

While the political ruling elites in former Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary took the political risk of engaging in neoliberal reforms and losing popular support, in Romania and Bulgaria the forward oriented task of democratization together with establishing a competitive market economy was significantly delayed. Therefore, a stable, though low-level equilibrium has been reached much earlier in former Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. Conversely,

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[24] See Béla Greskovits, *The Political Economy of Protest and Patience: East European and Latin American Transformations Compared* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998), 178, 181.

[25] Although the amount of literature on democratization is huge, for an insight into the debates following the 1989 "post-modern" revolutions see Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, eds., *The Global Resurgence of Democracy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

[26] Quoted in Greskovits, 35.

[27] Rostowski and Nicolić, 57-58.

an instable equilibrium, with a clear tendency towards concentrating on political competition and delaying economic reforms has been present in Bulgaria and Romania.

In order to support such an assertion, this section provides a comparison between Poland and Romania in terms of economic transformation and shows that in post-communist Romania economic reform was delayed because of the particular context in which the political competition was carried out. In other words, in countries that emerged from a "patrimonial type of communism," the main struggle was fought in the political sphere where the communist successor parties managed to control the political scene immediately after the regime change. In Bulgaria, the communist party simply changed its name into the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), which became the dominant political force in early post-communism. In Romania, the National Salvation Front (NSF) was established in order to fill the power vacuum generated by the sudden demise of the Ceauşescu regime and remained in power until 1996. With regard to the above-mentioned political risk that in the case of Romania the NSF did not want to take, one should note that the Petre Roman government that initiated a rather timid, but nevertheless neoliberal in substance, economic reform was considered too liberal by president Ion Iliescu and was practically dismissed in September 1991.[28]

To be sure, the decision of what type of economic transformation to adopt – fast or slow – was political. Nonetheless, the major conflict in post-communism in both countries was centered on the post-communist anti-communist vs. neo-communist divide, which was ideological, and much less on the issue of economic transformation. Since the competition was about which party or coalition of parties would accede to power, the result was that the "neo-communists" postponed the economic reform in order to preserve their electorates, made up mostly of workers, peasant-workers and peasants. The democratic parties in opposition were left with no other choice than to form a coalition in order to compete properly with the communist successor parties. Democratic opposition united more rapidly in Bulgaria, where the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) was created in December 1989 under the lead of philosopher Zhelyu Zhelev.[29] In Romania, it took until 1995 that the democratic opposition formed the Democratic Convention in Romania (DCR) and acceded to power after winning the 1996 general elections.[30]

A comparison between the post-communist economic reform strategies adopted by Romania and Poland, would be telling in this respect. In order to discuss Romania's strategy of economic transformation, it is instructive to consider the ten measures of the Polish "neoliberal scenario" of economic transformation,[31] and then to examine if, or to what extent,

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[28] For Roman's own account, see Petre Roman, *Libertatea ca datorie* (Liberty as duty) (Cluj: Editura Dacia, 1994), 156-59.

[29] For more on the post-1989 political spectrum in Bulgaria and the polemics on the issue of neoliberal economic reform, see Kitschelt et al., *Post-Communist Party Systems*, 121-25. Ivan Ilchev, *The Rose of the Balkans: A Short History of Bulgaria* (n.p.: Colibri, 2005), 402-03.

[30] On the rise and fall of the Democratic Convention in Romania, see Dan Pavel and Iulia Huiu, *"Nu putem reuşi decît împreună:" O istorie analitică a Convenţiei Democratice, 1989-2000* ("We can make it only together:" An analytic history of the Democratic Convention, 1989-2000) (Iaşi: Polirom, 2003).

[31] According to Greskovits, the set of policy recommendations related to the "neoliberal scenario" consists of the following: "(1) Fiscal discipline has to be restored; (2) Government subsidies need to be cut, although education and health care should be priorities for public expenditures; (3) Tax reform is necessary and should be aimed at broadening the tax base and moderating the marginal tax rates; (4) Interest rates have to be determined by the market, and real interest rates must be positive; (5) Exchange rates have to be determined by the market as well; (6) There is a need for liberalized, export–oriented trade regimes, while liberalization of foreign financial flows is not required; (7) Restrictions on foreign direct investment should be abolished; (8) State-owned firms have to be privatized; (9) Economic activities are to be deregulated; (10) Property rights are to be protected and secure." See Greskovits, 20-21.

each of the ten measures has been applied in Romania.[32] According to Stanislaw Gomulka, the Polish model of transformation has been based on the following ten measures: (1) immediate and resolute price and trade liberalization; (2) strict budget constraints for state enterprises and easy access on the market for new private companies; (3) slow and thorough privatization of medium and large-scale enterprises and rapid privatization of small enterprises; (4) adoption of a sound commercial code and "the inheritance of a legal system capable of enforcing contracts;" (5) close supervision and regulation of the banking sector; (6) government's readiness to accept the high unemployment that follows rapid restructuring; (7) low budget deficit of the government and the introduction of a effective tax system; (8) successful negotiations on reducing the foreign debt; (9) an exchange rate policy that provides stability to real effective exchange rates; and (10) expansion of business schools and rapid spread of information technology.[33]

If one addresses the same issues for the case of post-1989 Romania, the analysis results in the following characteristics of Romania's economic reform strategy, which also speak about the political strategy employed until the first shift in power of 1996 by the ruling party, the NSF, in order to preserve its electorate: (1) gradual liberalization of prices; (2) soft budget constraints for state enterprises and difficult access on the market for the new private companies; (3) slow pace of privatization; (4) difficulties in enforcing contracts; (5) a rudimentary, "captive" banking system; (6) readiness of the government to accept high unemployment, but unwillingness to proceed to a rapid restructuring; (7) difficulties in tax collection; (8) incompetence in making use of the advantage of not having external debts inherited from the communist regime; (9) an overappreciated official exchange rate until 1994; and (10) a slow penetration of information technology.

As a conclusion, one can notice that in terms of pace of transition, both political and economic, it was a "low-level equilibrium" between democratization and market reforms that led to a faster transition in the countries that emerged from both "bureaucratic-authoritarian" and "national-accommodative" communist regimes. Germany has been not discussed since it constitutes a rather exceptional case of sheer unification with the West. *Fast* reformers (former Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary) proved to be able to establish in post-1989 period polities in which the political competition was future oriented, i.e., towards both democratization and market economy. In countries emerging from "patrimonial communism" – the *slow* reformers – the post-1989 polities have been marked by a past oriented political competition that opposed the successor communist parties to the feeble democratic opposition. These countries were the slow reformers since the decision to apply only gradual reforms was made with the scope of preserving the electorates of the political left that would have been the victims of a rapid economic transformation. In this respect, a comparison between Poland and Romania has been provided in order to illustrate the differences between the fast and slow reformers with regard to the implementation of neoliberal reforms.

Coming to Terms with Communist Pasts

As Claus Offe aptly puts it, a regime change implies two major tasks: (1) a forward-looking task, that of building a new political and economic order; and (2) a backward-looking task,

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[32] For more on the economic evolutions in post-communist Romania see Daniel Dăianu, *Încotro se îndreaptă ţările postcomuniste?: Curente economice în pragul secolului* (Where are the post-communist countries heading for?: Economic currents at the turn of the century) (Iaşi: Polirom, 2000), 193-224. See also Ilie Şerbănescu, foreword to Dăianu, 11-12.

[33] See Stanislaw Gomulka, "Output: Causes of the Decline and the Recovery" in Peter Boone, Stanislaw Gomulka and Richard Layard, eds., *Emerging from Communism: Lessons from Russia, China and Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998), 32-33.

that of eliminating the perilous remnants of the old political and economic order.[34] At the same time, it may be argued that the nature of the regime change determines the strategy of fulfilling the two tasks mentioned above. As shown above, the task of building the new political and economic order has divided the group of six countries under scrutiny in *fast* and *slow* reformers. Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland proved to be faster in adopting a radical reform program, while Romania and Bulgaria, for the reasons detailed above, adopted a slower pace of reform. This section focuses on the strategies of addressing the "backward-looking" task mentioned above, i.e., that of dealing, and eventually *reconciling*, with the communist pasts.

Such a "backward-looking" task has at least three major components: (1) restitution; (2) retribution: and (3) historical analysis of the structures and policies of the previous regime.[35] The first component concerns the victims of the communist dictatorship and is related to compensations, restitution of property, etc. The second component focuses on the perpetrators and is related to their public exposure or disqualification and, where applicable, to criminal punishment. Finally, the task of historical reconstruction and analysis of the structures, policies (foreign and domestic), and interactions between regime and society during the communist period is future oriented and serves for inculcating democratic political cultures in the coming generations. There is also a direct relationship between application of transitional justice and the historical narratives that are produced during the transition period in the sense that the information that is made public during the court proceedings contributes to a more detailed historical reconstruction of the communist period. As Ruti G. Teitel aptly puts it, when dealing with the perpetrators via criminal justice, a historical reconstruction of the events is also produced: "Trials enable vivid representations of collective history through the recreation and dramatization of the criminal past in the trial proceedings. Further, this historical account is generally commemorated in a written transcript, often published."[36]

Considering the limits of the present paper, this section concentrates on the way the issue of exposing and punishing the perpetrators has been addressed in the six countries under consideration. As, Juan E. Méndez has argued, there is both a "legal obligation" and a "moral imperative" to deal with the human rights violations committed by the ancien régimes.[37] Moreover, it may be argued that this is also a problem of democratic consolidation, since the "bad" social capital represented by the intricate social networks and norms of reciprocity linking former communist officials, secret police officers and informal collaborators could have hampered the further democratization of the post-1989 polities discussed by this study. Robert D. Putnam and Kristin A. Goss, describe social capital as "social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity" and observe that "some forms of social capital are good for democracy and social health; others are (or threaten to be) destructive."[38]

In dealing with the communist past of its Eastern part, unified Germany proved to be the most consistent. The process involved three types of actions: (1) application of criminal justice; (2) disclosure of the Stasi agents and informal collaborators; and (3) establishment of a parliamentary commission for analyzing the institutions and policies of the communist

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[34] Claus Offe, *Varieties of Transition: The East European and East German Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1997), 82.

[35] See Figure II.I. – Types of responses to past injustices, in Claus Offe and Ulrike Poppe, "Transitional Justice in the German Democratic Republic and in Unified Germany," in Jon Elster, ed., *Retribution and Reparation in the Transition to Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 240.

[36] Ruti G. Teitel, *Transitional Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 72-73.

[37] See Juan E. Méndez, "In Defense of Transitional Justice," in A. James McAdams, ed., *Transitional Justice and the Rule of Law in New Democracies* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 1-26.

[38] Robert D. Putnam and Kristin A. Goss, "Introduction" to Robert D. Putnam, ed., *Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 8, 9.

regime.[39] What is important for the present study is that on 20 December 1991 it was issued the "Act regarding the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic" also known as the "Stasi Records Act." Through this Act, a special body – the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former GDR, also known throughout the 1990s as "the Gauck agency" – was established in order to: "take custody of, provide for the safekeeping of, administer, and use the records of the State Security Service" in accordance with the provisions of the Act, and has functioned uninterruptedly since then.[40] Most importantly, a major part of the Stasi files were saved from destruction. As Offe and Poppe put it: "No other post-Communist country has at the disposal of its authorities a comparable wealth of data that would be, on top of it, equally well protected from the interference of interested parties."[41] In many respects, this institution served as inspiration and model for those – politicians, intellectuals and civic activists – who argued in favour of opening the archives of the former communist secret police agencies throughout East-Central Europe.

Former Czechoslovakia was, after unified Germany, the country that applied most consistently early lustration. A Parliamentary Investigative Commission for the Clarification of Events of 17 November 1989 was also charged with establishing whether members of the Parliament and other top officials were collaborators of the former secret police, the StB by a resolution of the Federal Assembly (Resolution 94 of 11 January 1991).[42] On 4 October 1991 it was passed the "Lustration Law" which aimed at screening a broad range of holders of official positions within the state apparatus, presidential office, government, parliament, army, intelligence services, police forces, judiciary, banking system, Academy of Science, broadcasting institutions, press, and state companies.[43] Although controversies abounded, the Lustration Law did stir a public debate with regard to the issue of collaboration with the StB and had practical results. As Aviezer Tucker puts it: "Czech lustration was the most radical in the former Soviet bloc, with the exception of that in East Germany; 400,000 persons (4 percent of the population were subjected to lustration vetting, of whom 3 percent were found to have been a resident or a collaborator."[44]

As for Romania, the tortuous process of introducing lustration legislation can be summarized as follows: (1) Due to the peculiarities of the democratic transition in Romania, criminal punishment has been applied immediately after the regime change and was restricted to Ceauşescu's family and his inner circle of power, as well as to those involved in the repression of Timişoara and Bucharest protesters of December 1989; (2) the lustration process, in the form of an overall dealing with the files of the former secret police (the Securitate) was initiated only in 1999 with the passing of the "Law Regarding the Access to the Personal File and the Disclosure of the Securitate as Political Police" (Law 187/1999) and

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[39] This three-faceted process is described by Offe and Poppe as the "multitiered system of state-sponsored *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit*" in unified Germany. See Offe and Poppe, 259. On the establishment of the Commission of Inquiry see "Law Creating the Commission of Inquiry on 'Working through the History and the Consequences of the SED Dictatorship'" (14 May 1992) in Neil J. Kritz, ed., *Transitional Justice: How Emerging Democracies Reckon with Former Regimes*, vol. III (Washington D.C.: United States Institute for Peace Press, 1995), 216-19.

[40] See Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic, "Act regarding the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic (Stasi Records Act)," English version (Berlin: BStU), Section 2/(1).

[41] Offe and Poppe, 254.

[42] See excerpts from the "Report of the Parliamentary Commission on StB Collaborators in Parliament," in Kritz, ed. 307-11.

[43] See Czech and Slovak Federal Republic: Screening ("Lustration") Law (4 October 1991) in Kritz, ed., 312-21.

[44] Aviezer Tucker, "Paranoids May Be Persecuted: Post-totalitarian Transitional Justice," in Elster, ed., *Retribution and Reparation in the Transition to Democracy*, 201.

the establishment of the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (CNSAS); up to the present, the lustration process has been one-dimensional, i.e., has focused solely on those persons who were either agents or informal collaborators of the Securitate; and (3) although a project of a law destined to lustrate the former nomenklatura members has been presented to the Romanian Parliament only in 2005; however, a law in this respect has not been adopted yet.[45]

It may be argued that there are two major factors that influence the way transitional justice has been applied: (1) the nature of regime change, i.e., negotiated vs. collapse; and (2) the nature of political competition carried out in early post-communism, i.e., past or future oriented. Thus, a link can be established between the type of communist regime, way of exit from communism and the strategy adopted for dealing with the wrongdoings of the communist regime. Thus, the post-modern revolutions of 1989 were initiated by the Polish Roundtable Talks and continued by the Hungarian National Roundtable. It may be argued therefore that the original impetus for the 1989 changes came from the camp of "national-accommodative" communism. The regime change in GDR and Czechoslovakia, i.e., the camp of "bureaucratic-authoritarian" communism followed suit. Interestingly enough, the developments in the camp of "patrimonial" communism were not simultaneous. In Bulgaria the opponents of Todor Zhivkov from within the Politburo of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) staged a palace coup on 10 November 1989 and replaced him with the sitting Foreign Minister, Peter Mladenov. In Romania, the popular uprising in Timişoara spread to Bucharest and created a revolutionary situation that eventually led to the collapse of Ceauşescu's rule on 22 December 1989.

In terms of political and economic reform, the group of six countries under scrutiny divided itself into *fast* and *slow* reformers, which indicated a convergence of the paths pursued by the countries belonging to the former "national-accommodative" and "bureaucratic-authoritarian" camps (the fast reformers). The exit from "patrimonial communism" was more difficult, as the cases of Romania and Bulgaria – the slow reformers, have shown. Nonetheless, in terms of applying transitional justice, a major distinction has to be made between early and late lustration.[46] With regard to early lustration, only the paths pursued by former GDR and Czech Republic converged to some extent. Even in this case one can speak of German "exceptionalism" since the extent and consistency of the processes of restitution and retribution with regard to the deeds of the previous regime remain unmatched. In Czech Republic the process of lustration was applied with some consistency since the passing of the Czech Lustration Law in October 1991; however, after the initial impetus, the scope of the law was narrowed down by rulings of the Federal Constitutional Court. Hungary and Poland seem to be two similar cases in the sense of avoiding early lustration. As Aviezer Tucker aptly noted: "The theories that connect the degree of nastiness of the totalitarian regime and its level of resistance of transition with demands for transitional justice predict correctly the initial absence of transitional justice in Poland and Hungary in comparison with Czechoslovakia and East Germany."[47]

Nonetheless, what one might call a political paradox is the similarity of the cases of Poland and Romania in terms of applying late lustration. As shown above, the Romanian "Law of Access to the Personal File and Disclosure of the Securitate as Political Police" (Law 187/1999) has finally opened the process of dealing with the most obscure side of the

[45] For more on the Romanian case, see Dragoş Petrescu, "Dilemmas of Transitional Justice in Post-1989 Romania," in, Vladimira Dvorakova and Andelko Milardovic, eds., *Lustration and Consolidation of Democracy and the Rule of Law in Central and Eastern Europe* (Zagreb: Political Science Research Center, 2007), 127-151.

[47] Tucker, 192.

communist past in Romania. As already mentioned, during the first post-communist decade, the political confrontation in Romania was past oriented and took place between neo-communists and post-communist anti-communists. Until 1996 there were the neo-communists in power so that no lustration legislation was enforced. Nonetheless, there are two major aspects that need to be considered when discussing the way post-1989 Romania eventually initiated the process of systematically dealing with the Securitate files: (1) the 1989 revolution in Romania was violent; not only that people died in December 1989 but, like nowhere else in ECE, there is a material proof of the Revolution: the Cemetery of the Young Heroes in Bucharest; and (2) due to the extent of Stalinist terror in Romania, almost 2,000,000 were victims of the communist regime (dead, imprisoned, deported or subjected to house arrest);[48] the Association of the Former Political Prisoners in Romania (AFDPR) was arguably one of the best structured and most active civic associations in the post-1989 period – it was the president of AFDPR, Constantin Ticu-Dumitrescu, who devised the draft of the Law 187/1999, which is also known as the "Ticu Law." Therefore, it may be argued that it was exactly due to the past oriented politics in post-1989 Romania that the spectre of the Securitate continued to haunt the bulk of the population and thus the issue of opening the files of the secret police and disqualifying those who collaborated was brought to the fore time and again during the first post-communist decade.

The nature of regime change and the future oriented type of political competition led to a similar result in Poland, that is, a late initiation of the lustration process. Arguably, the regime change in Poland was determined by a future oriented type of politics: the Jaruzelski regime accepted to negotiate with Solidarity and finally to organize quasi-free elections in the hope of preserving power. A "strategic compromise" between the Jaruzelski regime and Solidarity, led to the peaceful revolution in Poland. As Adam Michnik put it: "The Polish Solidarity revolution followed an unusual course…. During the Round Table negotiations … between the reform wing of the Communist government and Solidarity, a compromise was reached that brought an end to Communist rule….*Solidarity adopted a philosophy of reconciliation and compromise among previously opposed political forces rather revenge* [emphasis added]."[49] Arguably, the initiation of the lustration process in Poland was also due to future oriented politics. The right-wing initiators of the 1997 lustration law in Poland and their political opponents, president Kwashniewski included, were more oriented towards future political competition than towards reconciliation with the past. The bitter remarks of Adam Michnik point towards a new political class that was not at the forefront of the Polish *refolution*, to quote Timothy Garton Ash, but proved to be ready to instrumentalize the secret police files for its own political gain.

Concluding Remarks

This paper has examined the collapse of communist regimes in Poland, Hungary, former GDR and Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania, that is, in the countries that experienced a regime change in 1989. As shown above, this study has argued that the nature of the 1989 regime change in these countries influenced not only the pace of political and economic

[48] A recent estimate places the number of political prisoners in Romania at approx. 600,000. If one adds the persons deported, placed under house arrest, interned in labour camps in the Soviet Union etc., the total number of the direct victims of the communist repression raises to approx. 2,000,000 persons. See Romulus Rusan, *Cronologia şi geografia represiunii comuniste din România: Recensământul populaţiei concentraţionare, 1945-1989* (Chronology and geography of communist repression in Romania: A census of detained population, 1945-1989) (Bucharest: Editura Fundaţiei Academia Civică, 2007), 61-62.

[49] Adam Michnik, "The Polish Witch-Hunt," translated from Polish by Olga Amsterdamska and Irena Grudzinska-Gross, *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 54, No. 11 (28 June 2007): 2; Internet http://www.nybooks.com/articles/20331.

reforms, but also the way in which the wrongdoings of the defunct communist regimes were dealt with. Consequently, this study has examined: (1) the nature of regime change; (2) the factors that determined the speed of the democratic consolidation process; and (3) the ways of coming to terms with the communist pasts. The analysis has been structured on two main parts.

The first part has proposed an explanatory model of the collapse of communist dictatorships in ECE centered on a culturalist-structuralist approach and has argued that the 1989 regime change in ECE was determined by an aggregation of three kinds of factors (structural, nation-specific and conjunctural). As shown above, the six countries under scrutiny have been divided into three types of communist regimes, considering both their pre-communist experiments in modernization and their evolutions under communist rule, as follows: (1) "bureaucratic-authoritarian" – German Democratic Republic (GDR) and Czechoslovakia; (2) "national-accommodative" – Poland and Hungary; and (3) "patrimonial" – Romania and Bulgaria. The particular aspects of regime change at country level were determined in each case by the interplay of regime and community political subcultures.

The second part has discussed two major aspects of democratic transition for the cases considered: (1) the pace of democratic transformation; and (2) the issue of coming to terms with the communist past. With regard to the pace of political and economic reforms, the differences between the paths pursued by the six countries considered were determined by an aggregation of factors, both internal and external. In those countries in which the political transformation went hand in hand with the economic reform, the transition was shorter due to the establishment of a delicate equilibrium between democratization and competitive market economy. As for the problem of coming to terms with the past and the adoption of lustration legislation, it was also the nature of the regime change that influenced the strategy of fulfilling the "backward looking" task of dealing with the wrongdoings of the defunct communist regimes. Thus, considering the first post-communist decade (1989-1999) one should discern between: (1) application of early lustration (former East Germany and Czechoslovakia); (2) late initiation of lustration as a result of political competition (Poland and Romania, 1997, respectively, 1999); and (3) very limited lustration in Hungary and Bulgaria.